UNITED
NATIONS

EP

UNEP/EA.1/L.8

Distr.: Limited
25 June 2014

Original: English

**United Nations
Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment
Programme**

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the
United Nations Environment Programme
First session**
Nairobi, 23–27 June 2014

Marine plastic debris and microplastics

Draft resolution submitted by the Committee of the Whole

The United Nations Environment Assembly,

Recalling the concern reflected in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want", that the health of oceans and marine biodiversity are negatively affected by marine pollution, including marine debris, especially plastic, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals and nitrogen-based compounds, from numerous marine and land-based sources, and the commitment to take action to significantly reduce the incidence and impacts of such pollution on marine ecosystems,

Noting the international action being taken to promote sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle and waste in ways that lead to prevention and minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment,

Recalling the Manila Declaration of the Third Intergovernmental Review Meeting on the Implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, which highlighted the relevance of the Honolulu Strategy and the Honolulu Commitment and recommended the establishment of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter,

Taking note of the decisions adopted by the eleventh Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on addressing impacts of marine debris on marine and coastal biodiversity,

Recalling that the General Assembly declared 2014 the International Year of Small Island Developing States and that such States have identified waste management among their priorities for action,

1. *Notes with concern* the serious impact which marine litter, including plastics stemming from land and sea-based sources, can have on the marine environment, marine ecosystem services, marine natural resources, fisheries, tourism and the economy, as well as potential risks to human health;

2. *Stresses* the importance of the precautionary approach according to which lack of full scientific certainty should not be used for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation, where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage;

3. *Recognizes* the significant risks arising from the inadequate management and disposal of plastic and the need to take action;

4. *Encourages* Governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, industry and other relevant actors to cooperate with the Global Partnership on Marine Litter in its implementation of the Honolulu Strategy and to facilitate information exchange through the online marine litter network;

5. *Recognizes* that plastics, including microplastics, in the marine environment are a rapidly increasing problem due to their large and still increasing use combined with the inadequate management and disposal of plastic waste, and because plastic debris in the marine environment is steadily fragmenting into secondary microplastics;

6. *Also recognizes* the need for more knowledge and research on the source and fate of microplastics and their impact on biodiversity, marine ecosystems and human health, noting recent knowledge that such particles can be ingested by biota, and could be transferred to higher levels in the marine food chain, causing adverse effects;

7. *Notes* that microplastics may also contribute to the transfer in the marine ecosystems of persistent organic pollutants, other persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic substances and other contaminants which are in or adhere to the particles;

8. *Recognizes* that microplastics in the marine environment originate from a wide range of sources, including the breakdown of plastic debris in the oceans, industrial emissions and sewage and run-off from the use of products containing microplastics;

9. *Emphasizes* that further urgent action is needed to address the challenges posed by marine plastic debris and microplastics, by addressing such materials at source, by reducing pollution through improved waste management practices and by cleaning up existing debris and litter;

10. *Welcomes* the establishment of the Global Partnership on Marine Litter launched in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012 and the convening of the first Partnership Forum in 2013;

11. *Welcomes* the adoption by the contracting parties to the Barcelona Convention in December 2013 of the world's first Regional Action Plan on marine litter management and the adoption of the OSPAR action plan on marine litter – awaiting adoption from the meeting, and encourages Governments to collaborate through relevant regional seas conventions and river commissions with a view to adopting such action plans in their regions;

12. *Requests* the Executive Director to support countries, upon request, in the development and implementation of national or regional action plans to reduce marine litter;

13. *Welcomes* the initiative by the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection to produce an assessment report on microplastics, which is scheduled to be launched in November 2014;

14. *Welcomes* the work undertaken by the International Whaling Commission on assessing the impacts of marine debris on cetaceans and the tenth Conference of Parties to the United Nations Environment Programme Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals endorsement of Resolution 10.4 addressing the impacts of marine debris on migratory species;

15. *Requests* the Executive Director, in consultation with other relevant institutions and stakeholders, to undertake a study on marine plastic debris and marine microplastics, building on existing work and taking into account the most up-to-date studies and data, focusing on:

(a) Identification of the key sources for marine plastic debris and microplastics;

(b) Identification of possible measures and best available techniques and environmental practices to prevent the accumulation and minimize the level of microplastics in the marine environment;

(c) Recommendations for the most urgent actions;

(d) Specification of areas especially in need of more research, including key impacts on the environment and on human health;

(e) Any other relevant priority areas identified in the GESAMP assessment of the Joint Group of Experts described in paragraph 12.

16. *Invites* the secretariats of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal and relevant organizations involved in pollution control and chemicals and waste management, and the secretariats of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on

Migratory Species and the regional seas conventions and action plans to contribute to the study described in paragraph 14;

17. *Encourages* Governments and the private sector to promote the more resource-efficient use and sound management of plastics and microplastics;

18. *Also encourages* Governments to take comprehensive action to address the marine plastic debris and microplastic issue through, where appropriate, legislation, enforcement of international agreements, provision of adequate reception facilities for ship-generated wastes, improvement of waste management practices and support for beach clean-up activities, as well as information, education and public awareness programmes;

19. *Invites* Governments, intergovernmental organizations, the scientific community, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders to share relevant information with the Executive Director pertinent to the study described in paragraph 14;

20. *Invites* those in a position to do so to provide financial and other support to conduct the study identified in paragraph 10;

21. *Requests* the Executive Director to present the study on microplastics for the consideration by the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme at its second session.